



Railroad and Ferry Depot Museum

By Dave Gotz

Perched on the edge of the Tiburon Peninsula in Shoreline Park, with priceless views of San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge and Angel Island, the Tiburon Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum is a historic reminder of Tiburon's railroad and maritime past. Constructed in 1885 as part of the railroad and ferry terminus and maintenance yard for the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad, it is the only dual-use depot known to survive west of the Hudson River. The building served as the freight and passenger office, the main telegraph office under Western Union, the Railway Express Office for Southern Marin County and also as the residence for the stationmaster.

When the railroad era in Tiburon came to an end in the late 1960s, the depot and shoreline were deeded to the Town of Tiburon for open space and a museum. For many years the building languished, used by various renters and town departments, until 1995 when the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society entered into a 99-year lease with the town and became responsible for the restoration and care of the building.

The lovingly restored gray building in Shoreline Park captures the past in two museums. On the ground floor, numerous railroad and ferry exhibits surround the centerpiece, a detailed operating HO-scale model of the Point Tiburon yard, which includes trains, ferry slips and Main Street circa 1900 to 1910.

Upstairs is the Depot House Museum, where the stationmaster lived with his family. The restoration was based on the memories of Florence Bent Palmer, the daughter of stationmaster, William Bent, who served from 1913 to 1940. Not only did Mrs. Palmer help the Landmarks Society insure an accurate depiction of her childhood home, she also donated furniture and others treasures that were once part of the residence.

The Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, and in 2007, the

Native Sons of the Golden West and the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society installed a plaque on the shoreline side of the building to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the incorporation of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad.

Thanks to our knowledgeable docent volunteers, visitors from around the world and children from local schools have the opportunity to learn about Tiburon's rich railroad history and get a first-hand look at middle-class home life in the early 1900s.

The museum is open to the public April-Oct., Wed.-Sun., 1-4 p.m. For more information, visit www.landmarkssociety.com, or call 415-435-1853.

